Animal welfare: Will you be a leader or a victim?

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JANUARY 1991

veterinary economics

THE MAGA E MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

INTRODUCING THE $40,000 GRADUATE

A NEW LOOK AT ASSOCIATE COMPENSATION

CONTENTS

VETERINARY ECONOMICS
JANUARY 1991

37 ISSUES

Animal welfare: Will you be a leader or a victim?

Your profession alone may not protect you in the face of today's animal welfare crusades. The author warns that veterinarians risk losing more than their tempers if they don't take note and take charge now.

43 PRACTICE BUILDER

Do you offer dentistry? These doctors say you should

Business is booming for these practitioners, thanks in large part to their willingness to provide dental services for their clients' pets. Here they explain how and why they promote dentistry.

47 CLIENT HANDOUT

Ready, aim, brush

Dental decay can cause bad breath and a host of other health problems for your pet. Here's how to help everyone breathe a little easier. *A special handout for your clients.*

30 COVER STORY

Introducing the $40,000 graduate

A new look at associate compensation

Today, new graduates make just over $25,000 a year. The authors say it's time to boost this amount significantly. Here they explain how (and why) you can pay more —and still realize a handsome profit on your investment.

Picture credits: page 83

52 PRACTICE FINANCES

To lease or to finance? Solving the purchasing dilemma

Can't decide if you should lease or finance a new piece of much-needed equipment? CPA Cynthia Wutchiett's guidelines point the way to a money-saving decision for your practice.

61 HOSPITAL DESIGN

Stepping back five feet into a winning hospital

Dr. Larry Gallig opened his new Raytown, Mo., facility not quite two yards from his former location, and not quite two days after his old practice closed. Here's how he accomplished such a feat.

66 PERSONNEL

Don't get tripped up by today's tough labor laws

Seemingly harmless personnel policies can get you accused of discriminating, violating civil rights, or failing to pay overtime. Here's how to protect yourself.

DEPARTMENTS

4 Memo from the Editor
7 Forecasts
10 Noteworthy/Success File
12 Letters to the Editor
14 Practice Management Q&A
16 Money Management Q&A
79 Marketplace

22 **Management Strategy**
Don't be outmaneuvered during negotiations. Here's how to stay in the game.

65 **Design Notes**
Confused by flooring options? Architects Gates and Hafen offer a suggestion.

73 **Tax Strategy**
Get the most from IRS rules when computing your tax-deductible auto expenses.

84 **Bull's Eye**
This practice management consultant says that a recession is in the mind of the beholder.

MEMO FROM THE EDITOR

Letters only, please

Now settle down. Before you send me a rose (or a grenade) in response to this month's cover story, read it again. How many times have you heard a consultant or a colleague (or yourself, for that matter) state in no uncertain terms that veterinarians need to charge more, make more, and pay more? The problem with that statement is that it's too easy to say—and far too easy to ignore.

Moving on to solutions is frustrating because the ideas quickly smash into a series of brick walls: "We can't pay more because we can't make more because we can't charge clients more." You can join this chorus at any point in the refrain and still see no way out. In the pages of this magazine, our contributors have advocated charging what you're worth, and the consensus seems to be that clients won't (and don't) flee in horror. This month, David Gallagher and Dr. Robert Frey tackle the problem from another angle: your need and ability to pay associates more money.

Now, lest you envision our editorial offices occupied by a snickering mob of associates who've seized control of the publishing channels, I'd like to point out that this solution, like the higher fee solution, is not designed to undermine your practice or your income. It also is not a solution that applies only to practices other than your own. It is a solution in which everyone is supposed to win, *beginning* with the practice and its owner. As for you associates, don't thank us too soon. The burden is on you to *earn* this money, for yourself and for your boss. No free lunches here.

Although "gifts" aren't necessary, I would like to hear what you think. Of course, I've never known you to be shy before, especially in the face of controversy. Does the proposal put forth by Gallagher and Dr. Frey make sense for veterinary medicine? I think so, but I'd rather you tell me.

Becky Turner

Rebecca R. Turner

veterinary economics

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comments on recessions, see Bull's Eye, page 84.

WELFARE VS. RIGHTS: WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Confused about the difference between animal welfare and animal rights? Most people aren't aware there's a difference—and if they are, they don't always know what it is.

It's no secret, however, that animals and those who seek to protect them are in the news. And it's also no secret that you as a veterinarian may be called upon to comment on animal welfare or animal rights issues.

Last summer, the AVMA's executive board finalized a policy statement on the matter, which should prove helpful in clarifying your thoughts and giving you a place to start. The policy states:

Animal welfare and animal rights are not synonymous terms. The AVMA wholeheartedly endorses and adopts promotion of animal welfare as official policy; however, the AVMA does not endorse the philosophical views and personal values of animal rights advocates when they are incompatible with the responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as food, fiber, companionship, recreation, and research conducted for the benefit of both humans and animals.

For more on how and why you should take a stand on these issues, see page 37.

WHAT WILL YOUR CLIENTS SPEND?

Total annual expenditures[1] of households, classified by age of household head, 1990-2000

	1990 Expenditures	1990 Market share	2000 Expenditures	2000 Market share	1990-2000 Percent change
Veterinary expenses					
18-34	$ 672	23.2	$ 681	17.1	+ 1.3
35-64	1,887	65.2	2,804	70.3	+48.6
65+	333	11.5	504	12.6	+51.4
Total	2,892	100.0	3,989	100.0	+37.9
Pet food					
18-34	$1,375	24.7	$1,305	19.1	– 5.1
35-64	3,597	64.5	4,865	71.0	+35.3
65+	605	10.8	680	9.9	+12.4
Total	5,578	100.0	6,850	100.0	+22.8
Pet services[2]					
18-34	$187	19.5	$ 222	15.2	+18.7
35-64	674	70.1	1,076	73.9	+59.6
65+	100	10.4	158	10.9	+58.0
Total	961	100.0	1,456	100.0	+51.5

[1]All dollar figures are annual totals in millions. Numbers may not add perfectly because of rounding.
[2]This category includes such services as clipping, grooming, training, and boarding.
Source: PREVENTION magazine. Information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; figures adapted by the National Planning Data Corporation.

TELEPHONE TIP

What's in a name? *Everything*, according to Nancy Friedman, The Telephone "Doctor." She says that callers like to know with whom they are speaking.

To provide this courtesy in your practice, your receptionist should always identify the hospital—and then herself. Name identification goes for doctors, too, whether you answer an outside line or take a call that is forwarded to your office.

To be sure that the caller understands the names, use a friendly "buffer" at the start: "Good morning, ABC Animal Hospital, this is Mary." Doctors, even a quick "hi" before you introduce yourself warms the call.

QUOTEBOOK

"The area I felt had great potential for benefiting people and animals was something commonly referred to as the human-animal bond. I believed if we could mobilize veterinarians, along with other health professionals and animal specialists, we could have an impact on many people—especially those lacking nurturing objects."

—Dr. Leo K. Bustad, who received the 1990 Distinguished Service Delta Award for his work in promoting the human-animal bond. ■